



STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

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Minutes Plumbing Code TAG

Date: May 6, 2010

Location: Seattle Area Pipe Trades Education Center

TAG Members Present: Dale Wentworth, TAG Chair; Larry Andrews; Dave Cantrell; Steve Menne; Bill Misocky; Frank VanderHorst

TAG Members Absent: Charly Mitchel, Steve Pennington, Donovan Quebedeaux, Terry Tackett, Fred Volkers

Staff Present: Krista Braaksma

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by TAG Chair Dale Wentworth at 9:10 a.m. Everyone was welcomed and introductions were made.

The agenda was approved as written.

REVIEW OF CODE CHANGE PROPOSALS

Log No. 10-01/UPC-1/IMC-1/IRC-10

Dale introduced this proposal as modifying the code to specify that electric water heaters installed in garages are not required to be elevated.

Krista noted that this proposal addressed four different codes—the UPC, the International Residential Code, the International Fuel Gas Code and the International Mechanical Code. The IFGC does not cover electric water heaters and it would not be appropriate to include language regarding electric water heaters. The IRC section referenced, G2408.2, is also in the fuel gas

section. It would be more appropriate to include the exception within the general mechanical section in R1307.3, Elevation of ignition source.

Larry noted that the garage is a Class 1 hazardous location. Wires in the bottom of water heaters short out and burn off. He felt this was a life safety issue. In addition, he stated this would conflict with the NEC, in article 500. Dale noted that Section 500 deals with commercial garages and is very specific about the 18 inch requirement. So it's very clear on the commercial side and not as clear for residential.

Bill agreed with Larry. Practical experience shows the bottoms get fried off on water heaters. He would prefer to err on the side of caution and require the elevation. It doesn't cost much to just raise the tank.

Dale also agreed, and stated he thought L&I might have a problem with it if it does conflict with the electrical code.

Dave stated that this has been an interpretation issue. Some jurisdictions view electric water heaters as ignition sources and some don't. Seattle hasn't required the elevation. He said he doesn't really care which way it goes, as long as there is some consistency gained.

Larry said that Spokane is requiring that even refrigerators and freezers installed in garages be elevated.

Dave said that this all came about when IAPMO began extracting language from NFPA into the Plumbing Code. The UPC previous had language similar to the IMC regarding source of spark, glow or ignition. Now, with the NFPA language, it specifically references gas water heaters. If that reference were removed, the language would be consistent throughout the codes.

Larry noted that the thermostats in electric water heaters contain standard contacts that spark and present a potential for ignition.

Dave felt it comes down to intent. Is the intent of the Mechanical Code to cover all potential spark generators?

Dale noted a spark is generated under normal operating conditions for gas water heaters; in electric tanks it is generated from malfunctions. He did concede that a spark was produced by the thermostat in electric water heaters.

Motion #1:

Dave Cantrell moved to recommend that the Council disapprove Log no. 10-01. Further, he recommends that Section 508.14 of the UPC be amended to strike the words "Gas utilization" so as to be consistent with the other code sections pertaining to elevation of ignition sources. Steve Menne seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Log No. 10-02/UPC-2

This proposal concerns the strapping of water heaters, and proposes three exceptions; allowing the lower strap to be moved to attain the necessary clearance above the controls and exempting tankless heaters and heaters less than 24 inches in height.

Steve felt this was already adequately covered by the code and he did not support the changes.

Larry stated that tankless heaters are required to be lag bolted. Bill stated that the bolting would be considered anchoring and is therefore covered by this section.

Dave stated he didn't feel there was any real problem being addressed by the proposal. He felt that if there were inspectors having a problem with moving the strap a bit to maintain clearance it was more an education issue for the inspectors.

Steve noted that water heaters less than 24 inches are often installed overhead and need to be strapped.

Motion #2:

Dave Cantrell moved to recommend to the Council that Log no. 10-02 be disapproved. Bill Misocky seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Log No. 10-03/UPC-4

This code change proposes to strike Section 608.7, requiring a relief valve on tanks located above fixture outlets in the hot water system.

Steve wondered if this section was really meant to address solar systems, although it doesn't actually reference them.

Larry stated there are high-rises with big tanks on the roof that feed internal systems. The tanks don't have very thick walls, and when you pull a vacuum from below there is a potential to crush the tank.

Dave stated he understood the intent behind the proposal. He said the Council issued an interpretation a couple of years ago that addressed this. Most tanks now have the dip tube in the upper part of the tank. But some don't, and if you remove this section you remove the requirement for the tanks that do need the valve installed.

Motion #3:

Dave Cantrell moved to recommend to the Council that Log No. 10-03 be disapproved. Steve Menne seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Log No. 10-10/UPC-3

This proposal adds a requirement for backflow protection on ice makers.

Larry remarked that he thought the requirement for an air gap was already required on all ice machines. Dale noted it was required on the drain line. Larry felt the second sentence requiring an RP device on ice makers with water-cooled condensers would be a good addition to the code. Bill believed it was covered under Section 603.4.8.

Dave felt the issue was already covered by existing code language. He stated it's difficult to have specific requirements for specific types of equipment. The industry just comes out with new things to quickly to respond to them all. That's why there is a requirement to install per manufacturer's installation instructions and the code.

Motion #4:

Dave Cantrell moved to recommend the Council disapproved Log no. 10-10. Bill Misocky seconded the motion. The motion carried with one opposing vote.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.